

## SUBCHAPTER F—RECORDS

### PART 81—PUBLIC AVAILABILITY OF GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE RECORDS

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#### § 81.1 Purpose and scope of part.

(a) This part implements the policy of the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) with respect to the public availability of GAO records, except as set forth in paragraph (b) of this section. While GAO is not subject to the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552), GAO's disclosure policy follows the spirit of the act consistent with its duties and functions and responsibility to the Congress. Application of this act to GAO is not to be inferred from the provisions of these regulations.

(b) GAO published testimonies, reports, decisions, special publications, or listings of publications are not included within the scope of this part. These documents may be obtained from the GAO Web site, <http://www.gao.gov>, or by telephone at 202-512-6000, TDD 202-512-2537, or 1-866-801-7077 (toll free). These publications may be downloaded free of charge from the GAO Web site. Paper copies requested from GAO are subject to a printing, shipping, and handling fee.

(c) Requests for all other GAO records are within the scope of this part and should be submitted to GAO as directed in paragraph (a) of § 81.4.

[68 FR 33832, June 6, 2003, as amended at 76 FR 12550, Mar. 8, 2011]

#### § 81.2 Administration.

GAO's Chief Quality Officer administers this part and may promulgate such supplemental rules or regulations as may be necessary.

[76 FR 12550, Mar. 8, 2011]

#### § 81.3 Definitions.

As used in this part:

(a) *Identifiable* means a reasonably specific description of a particular record sought, such as the date of the record, subject matter, agency or person involved, etc., which will permit location or retrieval of the record.

(b) *Records* includes all books, papers, manuals, maps, photographs, reports, and other documentary materials, regardless of physical form or characteristics, including electronically created or maintained materials, under the control of GAO in pursuance of law or in connection with the transaction of public business. As used in this part, the term "records" is limited to an existing record under GAO's control and does not include compiling or procuring records, library or museum material made, acquired, or preserved solely for reference or exhibition purposes, or extra copies of documents preserved only for convenience of reference.

(c) *Records available to the public* means records which may be examined or copied or of which copies may be obtained, in accordance with this part, by the public or representatives of the press regardless of interest and without specific justification.

(d) *Disclose* or *disclosure* means making available for examination or copying, or furnishing a copy.

(e) *Person* includes an individual, partnership, corporation, association, or public or private organization other than a Federal agency.

(f) *Compelling need* means that a failure to obtain requested records on an expedited basis could reasonably be expected to pose an imminent threat to the life or physical safety of an individual, or the records are needed urgently, with respect to a request made

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by a person primarily engaged in disseminating information, for the requester to inform the public concerning actual or alleged Federal Government activity.

### **§81.4 Requests for identifiable records.**

(a) A request to inspect or obtain a copy of an identifiable record of GAO must be submitted in writing to the Chief Quality Officer, U.S. Government Accountability Office, 441 G Street, NW., Washington, DC 20548. Requests also may be emailed to [recordsrequest@gao.gov](mailto:recordsrequest@gao.gov). The Chief Quality Officer will either acknowledge or honor the request within 20 days of receipt.

(b) The Chief Quality Officer will honor requests for expedited processing before all other requests in cases in which the person requesting the records demonstrates a compelling need. A demonstration of compelling need shall be made by a statement certified by the requester to be true and correct to the best of the requester's knowledge and belief.

(c) In the event of an objection or doubt as to the propriety of providing the requester with a copy of the record sought, every effort will be made to resolve such problems as quickly as possible, including consultation with appropriate GAO elements. If it is determined that the record should be withheld, the Chief Quality Officer shall inform the requester in writing that the request has been denied, shall identify the material withheld, and shall explain the basis for the denial.

(d) A person whose request is denied in whole or part may administratively appeal the denial within 60 days after the date of the denial by submitting a letter to the Comptroller General of the United States at the address listed in paragraph (a) of this section, explaining why the denial of the request was unwarranted.

[68 FR 33832, June 6, 2003, as amended at 76 FR 12550, Mar. 8, 2011]

### **§81.5 Records originating outside GAO, records of interviews, or records involving work in progress.**

(a) It is the policy of GAO not to provide records from its files that origi-

nate in another agency or nonfederal organization to persons who may not be entitled to obtain the records from the originator. In such instances, requesters will be referred to the person or organization that originated the records.

(b) It is the policy of GAO that prior to the release of a record of interview created by GAO in connection with an audit, evaluation, or investigation of a program, activity, or funding of a government entity, GAO will notify the agency from which an interview was obtained of the request. GAO will provide that agency with a reasonable opportunity to indicate whether the record of interview or portions thereof should be exempt from disclosure and the reason(s) for the exemption. The public disclosure of a record of interview remains within the discretion of GAO's Chief Quality Officer, but GAO will consider the views of the agency and the exemptions provided for under §81.6 or any other law or regulation in deciding whether to release all or portions of a record of interview.

(c) In order to avoid disruption of work in progress, and in the interests of fairness to those who might be adversely affected by the release of information which has not been fully reviewed to assure its accuracy and completeness, it is the policy of GAO not to provide records which are part of ongoing reviews or other current projects. In response to such requests, GAO will inform the requester of the estimated completion date of the review or project so that the requester may then ask for the records. At that time, the records may be released unless exempt from disclosure under §81.6.

[68 FR 33832, June 6, 2003, as amended at 72 FR 50643, Sept. 4, 2007]

### **§81.6 Records which may be exempt from disclosure.**

The public disclosure of GAO records contemplated by this part does not apply to records, or parts thereof, within any of the categories listed below. Unless precluded by law, the Chief Quality Officer may nevertheless release records within these categories.

(a) Records relating to work performed in response to a congressional